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Navy & Marine Corps Medical News
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This service distributes news and information to
Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees,
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Questions

Do you have a question about what TRICARE covers and
what it does not? About who's eligible and entitled to
TRICARE benefits? About filling out the TRICARE claim form
or where to send the claim after it's completed? Available
care through the military treatment facility or within the
civilian community? Do you need assistance getting yourself
or your family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime? Then the
Health Benefits Advisor is your primary point of contact and
can provide you with the information you need, to resolve
TRICARE related questions, no matter where you live.

HBA's are equipped to answer these important questions
and many others which you may have regarding your health
care benefits. HBA's can provide you with the necessary
TRICARE resources to help you better understand the program
to meet all your health care needs.

HBA's are located at every military hospital and clinic
worldwide. Your HBA is available to serve as your direct
liaison between you and the TRICARE claims processor. The
HBA also has a direct link to the TRICARE Support Office,
TRICARE Headquarters in Aurora, Colorado in resolving
disputes about TRICARE claims or appealing the decision made
by the TRICARE claims processor. Your HBA is also able to

assist and provide you with valuable information about the Medicare and Medicaid programs in addition to alternative resources designed to meet your health care needs.

For these and other reasons, it is important to know who your nearest Health Benefits Advisor is and how to contact them if you have questions or you are new to the TRICARE program. Additionally, HBA's can refer you to providers who accept TRICARE in your area, saving you time, money and paperwork.

By Doug Flynn, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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MN970456. Where to Go When You've Got Health Care Questions

Health Benefits Advisors (HBAs) are available at the following locations to provide advice and guidance about your military health care benefit. Call the HBA nearest you for more information.

Annapolis, MD	(410) 293-2276
Beaufort, SC	(803) 525-5640
Bethesda, MD	(301) 295-5143
Bremerton, WA	(460) 478-9386
Camp Lejeune, NC	(910) 451-4150
Camp Pendleton, CA	(619) 725-1262
Charleston, SC	(803) 743-7600
Cherry Point, NC	(919) 466-0124
Corpus Christi, TX	(512) 939-3238
Great Lakes, IL	(847) 688-5457
Groton, CT	(860) 449-4968
Jacksonville, FL	(904) 573-3300
Kings Bay, GA	(912) 673-4228
Lemoore, CA	(209) 998-4490
Millington, TN	(901) 874-5823
New Orleans, LA	(504) 678-2675
Newport, RI	(401) 841-4834
Oak Harbor, WA	(360) 257-9716
Patuxent River, MD	(301) 342-1457
Pearl Harbor, HI	(808) 474-4410 ext. 320
Pensacola, FL	(904) 505-6709
Port Hueneme, CA	(805) 982-6322
Portsmouth, NH	(207) 438-3862
Portsmouth, VA	(757) 953-7387
Quantico, VA	(703) 784-1535
Roosevelt Roads, PR	(787) 865-5913
San Diego, CA	(619) 532-8328
Twentynine Palms, CA	(619) 830-2572
Yuma, AZ	(602) 341-2916

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MN970457. Old-Fashioned Medical Tool Has New Use

Okinawa, Japan - It stretches. It creeps. It crawls. It bites. It sucks your blood.

And it could possibly save your limbs.

It's Hirudo medicinalis, a leech bred solely for medicinal purposes.

In recent weeks, Hirudo Medicinalis has been used at U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Okinawa on a 23 year old Marine and two children, aged 9 and 7. All had severe lacerations or severed fingers.

LCDR Tim Mologne, MC, and Lcdr David Sitler, MC, of Okinawa's orthopedic department were on call for the emergencies and performed successful surgery on all three.

"All three of these patients would have lost their digits if surgery had not been performed," said Sitler. According to Sitler, his 7 year old patient needed bone, nerve, artery and vein repair. In this case, the veins were so tiny and damaged that they couldn't be completely repaired, so while blood was delivered throughout the finger via the arteries, it couldn't be drained away by the veins. Failure to drain the blood might mean the loss of the finger.

"We needed help," Sitler said.

Enter Pharmacist LT Pam O'Loughlin, MSC. She found a supplier of leeches on the mainland of Japan and sent for them so that they could be put on the young patient's finger to drain the blood.

"Leech therapy has been used for hundreds of years, but this is the first time we've used it here," said O'Loughlin. She said the medicinally-bred leech has a natural occurring anesthetic in its saliva so there's no pain when it bites.

"Each leech is only used once," she said. "It feeds on the area of the digit needing drainage for about 10 to 15 minutes and falls off."

Not only are the leeches an effective medical tool, they're also a great bargain.

"At \$25 each (they) are a bargain compared to what it might cost if we had to medevac the patient," she said.

By HMCM (SW) M. C. Carr, USNH Okinawa

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MN970458. USS NIMITZ Surgeons Work on Aircraft

Aboard USS NIMITZ - A surgical team from USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) and embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 recently brought Navy medicine to the deck plates in an unusual procedure on an ailing aircraft.

CVW-9 flight surgeon LT Juliann Gould, MC, and NIMITZ surgeon CAPT Frederick Ludwig, MC, used a colonoscope, a medical tool used to probe the human body, to evaluate structural damage of an F-14A Tomcat.

The colonoscope uses a fiber optic camera attached to a slender tube to provide video inside the human body. Surgeons control the camera remotely, while viewing the video on a monitor.

Four days prior to the F-14's structural evaluation, the aircraft had suffered a hard landing on NIMITZ's flight deck.

According to ENS Rocky Riley, maintenance material control officer of Fighter Squadron (VF) 211, when an aircraft endures a hard landing, it must be inspected for internal damage. A hard landing assessment of this type

requires the examination of the internal components of the aircraft. One such component was unreachable with VF-211's available tools.

AVCM(AW) Dennis Reilly, familiar with the innovations of naval medicine, suggested contacting the ship's medical department. Reilly asked Gould if there were any medical procedures that could be used to inspect an internal structural beam.

Gould suggested using the ship's new colonoscope.

Ludwig inserted the colonoscope into the internal wall of the aircraft and maneuvered the camera, viewing a video image on a monitor. Riley and other members of VF-211 reviewed the video and found no structural damage.

Ludwig said that his lack of familiarity with the aircraft was the only obstacle.

"I was trained on the anatomy of the human body. I don't know the anatomy of aircraft. This was something new to me," he said.

According to Riley the operation was a complete success. Without the colonoscope, the aircraft would have had to be disassembled for inspection, a month-long procedure that could have cost an estimated \$100,000.

"We were glad we could assist in the evaluation," said Gould. "Something like this is a tremendous morale boost for the department. It's not something we get to do every day. It's exciting."

By JO2 Kendall L. Calvin, USS NIMITZ

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MN970459. Kick The Habit November 20!

Washington, DC - The Navy's Annual Smokeout, in cooperation with the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, will be held November 20.

The Navy endeavors to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce tobacco use so as to improve the overall health of Sailors and Navy civilians. Although Navy smoking rates continue to drop slowly, the 35 percent average still exceeds the national average of 31 percent. The Bureau of Naval Personnel has provided fleet commanders and major overseas activities smokeout materials for distribution to the fleet.

Research has determined that smoking causes heart disease, cancer, bronchitis, emphysema and other illnesses. Smokeless tobacco can lead to oral cancer, mouth sores and disfigurement. All of these maladies are preventable and have an impact on readiness.

Questions regarding the Navy's Annual Smokeout and requests for additional information can be directed to LCDR Evan Thorley, MSC, Bureau of Naval Personnel, at 703-695-4024 or DSN 225-4024 or e-mail p601@bupers.navy.mil. Additional information is also available in NAVADMIN 241/97.

Information to assist commands in having a successful local smokeout is available from the American Cancer Society at 800-227-2345.

By Michael McLellan, Bureau of Naval Personnel
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MN970460. 295-CARE - Bethesda Introduces New Call Routing System

Bethesda, MD - Beginning next month, National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) Bethesda will have a new automated call routing system to assist patients and staff navigate the center.

The system's easy to remember access number is (301) 295-CARE. It can also be reached from outside the local area by dialing 1 (800) 526-7101.

The automated menu available to callers provide connections to the emergency room, primary care clinics, routine appointments, customer services and many other locations. Callers have the option of exiting the system to speak with a "live" hospital representative at any time during the call.

The automated call routing system is part of a voice messaging system purchased by the command earlier in the year.

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MN970461. Logistics Command Renews Educational Partnership
Frederick, MD - Naval Medical Logistics Command (NMLC) at Fort Detrick, MD, renewed their commitment to provide volunteers to tutor and mentor the students of nearby Monocacy Elementary School in Frederick recently.

CAPT Thomas R. Defibaugh, MSC, NMLC's commanding officer, signed the partnership agreement with the school, renewing what has been a four year commitment. Volunteers from NMLC help students with academic skills, as well as other skills, such as proper use and display of the American flag.

"The relationship they foster with the children - we feel that's invaluable," said Geni Rhoten, a reading specialist at Monocacy. "The students thrive from the attention they get from the community."

According to Rhoten, the NMLC volunteers provided about a fourth of the volunteer hours at the school.

NMLC's partnership program is managed by LT L. M. Owens, MSC.

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MN970462. Operation Dear Abby 1997 Fleet Addresses Listed

Mechanicsburg, PA - Mailing addresses for the 1997 holiday season's Operation Dear Abby have been announced by the Military Postal Service Agency.

Operation Dear Abby is a goodwill effort begun 12 years ago by nationally syndicated columnist Abigail Van Buren to bring holiday cheer to the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces. Through her column she solicits patriotic Americans to send cards, letters and packages to service members stationed overseas.

This year, to ensure mail is evenly distributed to all services, the mail will be targeted to Fleet Mail Centers and U.S. Military Aerial Mail Terminals overseas instead of to specific units or countries.

There are two Fleet Mail Center addresses for Operation Dear Abby Mail. These addresses will accept Operation Dear Abby mail, first class and priority parcels only, from November 15, 1997 to January 15, 1998.

The two Fleet Mail Center addresses are: America Remembers, OPERATION DEAR ABBY, FPO AE 09646 (Mediterranean Basin); and America Remembers, OPERATION DEAR ABBY, FPO AP 96385 (Pacific Basin).

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MN970463. TRICARE Question and Answer

Question: I'm retired from the military. My wife and I enrolled in TRICARE Prime. I was assigned a Primary Care Manager. What or who is that?

Answer: A Primary Care Manager (PCM) is the first health care provider you'll see when you need care. PCMs will help you get specialty care, if you need it, and also monitor your overall health.

PCMs are usually physicians, but they can also be Independent Duty Corpsmen, nurse practitioners, and other qualified health professionals. It may also be an entire clinic of health care professionals.

It is important to remember that you must see your PCM first before you go to a specialist or receive other health care. Otherwise, you are subject to the Point of Service option for health care, which can be very costly.

Additional information about TRICARE is available through your local health benefits advisor, TRICARE Service Center and on the Department of Defense (Health Affairs) Homepage on the World-Wide Web at <www.ha.osd.mil>.

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MN970464. Healthwatch: Some No-Nonsense Numbers About Kids' Smoking

According to the American Cancer Society, smoking is the number one preventable cause of early death in the United States.

If you don't quit smoking for yourself, think about your children. We must remember that "The best sermon is a good example." Kids often ignore what we say - but they're always watching what we do.

Here are some frightening statistics about children's smoking from the American Cancer Society:

- 3,000 American kids start smoking every day.
- 1,000 of these 3,000 kids will eventually die of smoke-related diseases.
- 75 percent of children who start smoking as a short-term "experiment" are still smoking five years later; they become addicted in spite of their best intentions.
- 90 percent of today's smokers started smoking before.

they reached 20; if you don't start smoking before age 20, you probably never will.

- nearly 20 percent of today's 13- to 14-year olds smoke.

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail <mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil>, telephone 202/762-3218 (DSN 762-3218), or fax 202/762-3224.